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THE OBLIGATION OF THE STATE TO PROVIDE FOR THE EDUCATION OF ITS CITIZENS; THE EXTENT OF THE OBLIGATION; AND THE GROUNDS ON WHICH IT RESTS.

EDUCATION AND THE STATE:

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
AT THEIR FIRST ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, HELD IN THE
STATE CAPITOL AT ALBANY,

JULY 10, 1879,

BY

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ADDRESS.

MR. CHANCELLOR :

It was on the 25th day of November, 1783, that the British troops under Sir Guy Carleton withdrew from the city of New York. Thus ended the last act in the tragedy of blood and fire, which for seven anxious years had filled the country with gloom. On the same day the Commander-in-Chief of the armies of the United States, accompanied by his Excellency, George Clinton, Governor of the State of New York, made his entrance into the city. Salvoes of artillery, fired from the Battery, welcomed his arrival, and saluted the star-spangled banner as it went up on the flag-staff of Fort George.

The heavily afflicted city breathed once more freely.

Almost in the very beginning of the struggle this unhappy town had fallen into the possession of the enemy, and during the long period of hostile occupation which followed, it had suffered far more than the ordinary miseries attendant on military rule. Even in the hour of its downfall, and while the shame and grief of its humiliation were still fresh, there fell upon it a new and frightful disaster, which to the pain of subjugation superadded the menace of an immediate and more material distress.

It was the 20th of November, 1776, a date memorably dismal in the annals of New York. The hour was midnight. The newly arrived and exultant troops of Howe had just reached their camping ground on the north-east-

ern limit of the city, and were still engaged in pitching their tents, when a vast cloud of smoke arose upon the southern horizon. Tongues of fire were presently seen shooting up in the neighborhood of Whitehall Landing, and, directly after, an immense sheet of flame spread rapidly from river to river, and sweeping along the great central thoroughfare through the heart of the district in which the wealth, the refinement, and whatever of architectural beauty the city might have to boast, were concentrated, reduced, in a few brief hours, the whole region extending from the Bowling Green on the south to the streets above St. Paul's on the north, to a waste of black and smoking ruins. Of the better class of citizens, a fourth part were left houseless in one night, and of their accumulated wealth a large proportion had vanished in smoke and flame.

Through all the sad years that followed, no hand was lifted to repair the desolation, or to remove its disheartening evidences from sight. Neither motive nor encouragement existed to stimulate the attempt. With the military occupation all the arts of peace had been paralyzed, all commerce, foreign and domestic, extinguished, and the spirit of enterprise was thoroughly broken.

But, miserable as was the aspect of this doomed and blasted quarter, the plight of that portion of the town which the conflagration had spared was not much better; so that, when, at last, the exiled patriots who had seven years previously fled in haste at the approach of Howe, returned to their long deserted and now dilapidated dwellings, the melancholy spectacle which met their eyes filled them with a sadness which even the remembrance of their newly established liberties could not dispel.

With the restoration of the legitimate authority of the State came the return of hope and some slight renewal of

activity ; but it was only by slow and almost imperceptible degrees that the stricken town recovered the visible semblance of its earlier prosperity. When, therefore, six weeks later, the Legislature of the State of New York assembled for the first time in its constitutional capital, it was under the influence of the depressing scene I have endeavored imperfectly to describe, that it entered on its labors. By what means most speedily to lift up the prostrate prosperity of the country, was the question which swallowed up every other in the anxious thoughts of the members. For not the city only, but the entire commonwealth, had sunk down in a common ruin. The exigencies of the war had drained its resources to exhaustion. All industries were stagnant. Agriculture alone maintained a feeble vitality. The public credit was at the lowest ebb, and private credit had ceased to exist. A worthless legal tender medium of exchanges gave to every ordinary business transaction the character of a game of chance, and arrested completely the operations of general commerce.

Such was the state of things when the first message of the Governor after the peace was laid before the assembled Legislature. This message shows the profound conviction of the Chief Magistrate that, of all the calamities which war had brought with it, there were none greater than the ignorance which the dispersion of the colleges and the closing of the schools had entailed upon the rising generation. Among the matters of pressing urgency which, in the low state of the public fortunes, seemed to call for early consideration, none in his mind could take precedence of this ; and therefore, after reverently acknowledging the favor of an overruling Providence by which the seal had been put to the national independence, and indicating the principal matters of public concern requiring

immediate legislative action, he continued in the following memorable words :

“ Neglect of the education of youth is among the evils consequent on war. Perhaps there is scarce anything more worthy of your attention than the revival and encouragement of seminaries of learning ; and nothing by which we can more satisfactorily express our gratitude to the Supreme Being for his past favors ; since piety and virtue are generally the offspring of an enlightened understanding.”

This wise recommendation of the Governor received the prompt approval of both Houses. A bill was speedily introduced, and on the first day of May following was passed into a law, providing, among other things, “*for erecting an University within this State.*” In this act are delineated the features of an organization the most comprehensive in its plan of all the educational instrumentalities yet created on this continent. Under it has grown up, during the century which has since elapsed, the splendid system of superior and secondary education of which we have so much reason to be proud ; and which places New York in many respects so far in advance of her sister States.

The original act was found in some respects imperfect ; but chiefly in the respect that it was complicated by the attempt to combine the principle of general supervision with the special administration of the affairs of particular institutions. These imperfections were remedied by substituting for it, three years later, a more perfect law, carefully prepared by the accomplished scholar and far-seeing statesman, Alexander Hamilton. Under this more perfect law was constituted the university of to-day—the organization which, nearly at the close of a century of signal and uninterrupted usefulness, has gathered its

friends together, including among them many who have enjoyed, or who have assisted in distributing, its benefits, to unite with it on this occasion in inaugurating a new era in its history.

Honored by the Regents of the University with an invitation to deliver an address appropriate to the occasion of their first annual commencement, it has seemed to me that I could best discharge this duty by devoting the hour allotted to me to the discussion of a topic partly suggested by a consideration of the functions which they themselves fulfil in our educational system, and partly by the discordant views of educational questions which I have encountered from time to time in the public journals.

This topic is the relation of the State to education—the obligation of the State to provide for the education of its citizens—the extent of the obligation—and the grounds on which it rests.

The question, What is the duty of the State towards education? has never been distinctly settled to the universal satisfaction. It has been debated very generally upon grounds more sentimental than logical, especially by those whose views of the subject are most liberal. With such, the elevating influence of education, the dignity of the human intellect and the necessity of culture to its development, the abject condition of a community where ignorance prevails, and the vice which usually follows in the train of ignorance, are fruitful themes of plausible argument. Such considerations show very conclusively that education is a good thing, but they prove nothing clearly as to the duty of the government in regard to it. Health, piety, temperance are good things, but it does not follow that the government should establish agencies to make men pious, healthy, or temperate.

Moreover, the elevating influence of education is not strikingly perceptible, except where the process has been carried far ; so that the weight of this argument applies mainly to that higher education which can be the privilege only of the few.

As to the importance of education, however, whether to the welfare of the State or the well-being of the individual, opinions are not at all divided. That provision ought to be somehow made for the education of the young, is matter of common agreement. But to what extent the State should charge itself with this important interest, should devise the systems and establish the institutions of education, should exact and enforce the attendance of the individuals who are to be educated, and should defray the cost attending these operations, are questions in regard to which intelligent persons widely differ. It is not even universally agreed that the State should concern itself with the matter at all. There are radicals who hold that education is a purely individual interest, with which the State has nothing to do, and with which it should not meddle. There are extremists opposed to these, who maintain that education is an universal interest with which the State has everything to do, for which it should generously provide through all the grades even to the highest, and should throw freely open to all comers without charge. Neither of these parties is numerous relatively to the population ; but the one last named is locally very strong, and its views are practically illustrated in the permanent maintenance of the only absolutely free college in the world, which is also the most largely attended institution of its name in the State of New York. The common opinion lies somewhere between the extremes here indicated ; if it is proper to say that there is any common opinion where there is no agreement

as to the point up to which the obligation of the State extends, or as to the limit beyond which it cannot be pressed.

This great diversity of views indicates the absence of any general recognition of the fact that there are settled principles to which the question at issue may be referred, and by which the extent of the obligation of the government to maintain education may be ascertained. The discussions which take place upon the subject scarcely in the least involve these ultimate principles, but are almost exclusively concerned with the immediate effects of education as making the individual a better man, and therefore by inference a better citizen. In this form the argument is necessarily inconclusive, because it proves too much. It proves as well that we should have free national universities and free state colleges, as that we should have free common schools. Because the prosperity of a community is dependent on the general intelligence of its members, because educated men become naturally the leaders of society, because the exclusion of the poor from the higher education handicaps them unfairly in the race of life, because the largest education freely offered is the only means by which the genius lurking in the humbler ranks of society can surely be detected and developed and made serviceable—these are all apparently potent reasons why opportunities for the highest culture should be freely open to all.

But these arguments are just as applicable to special, technical, or professional education, as to that which is called general or liberal, and perhaps even more so. When we say that the prosperity of a people is dependent on its general intelligence, we mean that it is indirectly or remotely so dependent. But between the same prosperity

and the condition of the mechanic arts among the same people, the connection is immediate and direct. And if, in regard to general culture, it is an unjust discrimination to deny to the indigent the opportunities enjoyed by their more fortunate fellow-citizens, why not equally so to close against them the avenues to the scientific and learned professions? Every argument in this category which can be urged in favor of opening literary colleges at the public expense free to all comers, can be advanced with equal propriety in favor of similarly opening free schools of agriculture and the mechanic arts, free schools of engineering, metallurgy, chemical analysis, and other branches of technology, and finally free schools of law, medicine, and why not even theology?

In reference to agriculture and the mechanic arts, the arguments have been so used, if not as yet pushed to their logical limit; for Congress has been called upon to contribute largely to the endowment of such schools in every state, and has liberally responded to the call. It does not follow that because Congress has done this, its action has been wise. As to that I say nothing; but merely remark in passing that the considerations which induced this legislation were not probably those large and liberal ones I have above suggested — considerations which should logically lead to the endowment just as freely of schools for lawyers and engineers as of schools for mechanics and farmers—but the fact that there are, as politicians are quite well aware, a great many mechanics and a great many farmers in the country, and not by any means as many engineers or lawyers.

If government has a duty in the case, this duty should rest on logical grounds which admit of being distinctly stated.

The objects for which governments are constituted are few and simple. They are :

1. To provide for the common defence.
2. To protect the citizen in his rights of person and property.
3. To furnish him security in the peaceful prosecution of his chosen pursuit.
4. To institute tribunals for the administration of justice.
5. To treat with other governments, and to adjust questions which may arise with such, amicably or by force.

Strictly speaking, only such operations or measures of government are legitimate, which are promotive, more or less directly, of the objects here enumerated. But as governments are supreme, and as rulers are usually inclined to take a liberal view of the extent of their powers, it happens that many governmental acts occur which would not bear the application of this severe test. Our Constitution, which authorizes Congress to raise money by taxation, authorizes also the expenditure of the same, in the first place, for objects specifically defined ; and secondly, for such others undefined as may be deemed promotive of the general welfare. This clause, which has been very freely interpreted, can be properly construed only in reference to that rule unwritten in the constitution, and which is a law of reason antecedent to and above the constitution, which limits representative government to measures properly promotive of the objects for which governments are instituted. To understand “the general welfare” in any other sense, is to open the door to possibilities of the most dangerous character. It would doubtless be promotive of the general welfare, if every man could be provided with constant and remunerative employment ; or, failing that, with a pension suffi-

cient to maintain him in comfort ; but it is not the business of the State to see after this, because such provisions have nothing to do with the objects for which governments properly exist. There are some among our countrymen, and many in other countries, who believe that it would be promotive of the general welfare, if all great business enterprises requiring large capital and the union of resources should be undertaken by the State, and all corporations rigidly prohibited. Others believe this doctrine to be a great mistake ; but it is really a matter of no consequence whether that is true or not, since it does not fall within the legitimate province of the government to do any such thing. In some parts of our country popular opinion leans strongly to the belief that the general welfare would be prodigiously promoted by an unlimited issue of irredeemable legal tender notes, and a disuse of all money in the form of coin. We need not discuss the reasonableness of this belief in order to arrive at the conclusion, on the other hand, that the government ought not to do the thing demanded ; because such an act would self-evidently be in conflict with that duty of the government which requires it to protect the rights of property, and to maintain, or at least do nothing to impair, the steadiness of values, which would be greatly menaced by such a proceeding.

In order therefore to demonstrate the duty of the State to provide for the education of the people, it is not enough to allege that such provision must necessarily be promotive of the general welfare. It is necessary to show further that such provision conduces in some important degree to the accomplishment of the proper objects of government.

Now in order to the most satisfactory accomplishment of these objects, it will not be questioned that the largest

knowledge and the highest mental cultivation are to be desired, and ought if possible to be secured, in the men who stand immediately at the head of affairs. But that it is equally essential to good government that the people generally should possess similar intelligence and cultivation, is not immediately obvious. In states whose rulers belong to, or are derived from, a particular and limited class, the immediate ends of good government may be sufficiently subserved by the education of this particular class. But even in such a state, it does not follow that the education of the people is likely to be without its use to the government, or matter of indifference to it. For it is to the interest of autocrats even that the people should be content, and therefore that industry should thrive, and therefore that the industrial class should be intelligent. History is full of monitions to this effect, from the secessions of the plebeians at Rome down to the communistic commotions of the present day. As education is promotive of the peace of society, therefore, it is to be expected that it will find favor with autocratic governments, through the mere instinct of self-preservation.

But despotic governments find an additional reason for promoting the education of the people, in the opportunity it affords for guiding and controlling the sentiments, as well as of cultivating the intelligence. As the impressions made upon the mind in early life are the most enduring, so the duty of obedience to the monarch and of reverence for his representatives may be most effectually inculcated among the lessons of the schools. And as governmental supervision may also take care that no disturbing questions of public policy shall find a place in the system of instruction, so it is possible, by a skilfully constructed educational scheme, to provide more efficacious safeguards for the stability of political institutions than can

be found in any system of police. Such an educational system affords a capital example of the practical wisdom of the policy which prevents the occurrence of evils, over that which would restrain or cure them after they have occurred.

To a certain extent under a representative government, similar reasons exist why the State should charge itself with the education of the young. If there is danger to the peace of society arising from the pressure of want among the industrial classes, this danger is just as great under one form of government as under another. And though a system in which the ruler is the elect of the people does not make reverence for the person of the chief magistrate a duty to be inculcated, it does require reverence for his office, and for the law of which he is the visible embodiment, with no less positiveness ; and in the absence of this sentiment, its stability is no less precarious.

Under a democratic form of government, however, additional reasons present themselves why the citizen should be educated, and, if that be possible, well educated. Under such a government every great measure of state policy must be settled at last by the voice of the people ; and it will be settled wisely or unwisely according to the degree of the popular intelligence. Such at any rate would be the case if the settlement of public questions by the popular vote could always be regarded as an expression of the popular judgment, and not merely, as to our misfortune it often is, of the popular will. The distinction is important ; for in many instances, there is reason to think, it is not so much the merit of a proposed measure that governs what we are accustomed to call the vote of the enlightened freeman, as it is the party flag on which the measure is inscribed, or the bearing it may have upon his section or his neighborhood.

Many of these questions indeed are of a nature too intricate to be correctly judged on their merits by the average voter, or even by the average well-educated voter. According to the abstract theory of republican—that is to say, representative—government, they are not to be so judged ; nor is it presumed that they will ever be referred to the direct arbitrament of the popular vote. This theory assumes that the representative is not only to act but to think for his constituency. It recognizes as an axiom the proposition that statecraft is a science, in which no man can be an expert except by dint of much study, of thorough knowledge of the experience of the past, and large observation of the conditions and needs of the present. According to this view, therefore, questions of state policy should be decided by statesmen, precisely as questions of law are decided by judges.

It is accordingly, in this theory, a necessary assumption that the representative will be a statesman, or will be as near an approach to that character as the community he represents affords. He will be one of the few whose minds have been enriched by the knowledge, and whose faculties have been disciplined by the training, which the highest education furnishes. He will probably be thoroughly versed in history, and familiar with the principles of public economy and of governmental science. He will have been selected by his fellow-citizens because of his possession of these qualifications, and because they desire to profit by a wisdom which they feel to be superior to their own. Finally, he will be maintained with some permanence in his prominent position, because the reasons which originally placed him there will be reinforced by the consideration that his power of usefulness is increased by every year of added experience. In a representative republic theoretically perfect, therefore, the

business of the State will be as certainly confined to a limited number of men fitted by training and by experience for the proper discharge of their duties, as under an aristocratic or a monarchical government ; the difference only being that, in the republic, the rulers and lawgivers hold their important trust from the free choice of their fellow-citizens, and not by inheritance or asserted divine right.

But the ideal representative republic is an idea only—a mere Utopian dream. It never has had an existence in fact ; and so long as human nature continues to be what it is, it never can exist. Our own Federal Constitution presents us the skeleton outline of such a scheme, of which it was intended perhaps to embody the reality. But so far is it from being true that our representatives are selected for their breadth of culture, largeness of information, or repute for sound judgment or elevated principle — these characteristics often prejudice rather than promote the prospects of a candidate for political success. And so far is it from being true that the representative is expected to be guided by his personal convictions, or permitted to exercise his own best judgment in the votes he may give upon public questions—his course is prescribed to him in advance by a dictatorial power which he cannot resist, or resists only at the price of his position, and with the certain penalty before him of ignominious degradation. So far therefore as the ultimate decision of questions in our legislative councils by majority of voices or by show of hands is concerned, it matters not whether our representatives are able or weak, well-informed or ill-informed, wise or foolish, eloquent or dull ; the practical result is the same, because it has been foreshadowed from the moment the counting of the ballot-boxes has shown who were the men who were to cast the votes.

The representatives, nevertheless, are not usually of the weak or the foolish or the dull, nor always (though they are too often) of the ill-informed. It is not altogether matter of indifference to the constituency what manner of man shall speak for them in the councils of the State. They prefer a strong man because they hope to profit by his strength ; they respect intellect, but intellectual independence not at all. What they want in a representative, in short, is an advocate and not a judge.

The reason of this is not far to seek. Little as the debates in our legislative halls may have to do with the final disposition of the measures to which they relate, and of which, in ninety-nine cases out of the hundred, the fate is as perfectly well known before the debate begins as after it is over, yet these debates have very much to do with the probable constitution of the same legislative body after another election. The floods of oratory, therefore, which periodically deluge the august Houses of State and Federal legislation, are not designed or intended to impress or convince those upon whom they are directly poured out ; but they have their motive in the hope that, by their refreshing irrigation, diffused over the broad surface of the country, they may nourish into vigor a growth of popular opinion favorable to the political organization to which the orator belongs. Thus the real business in which our legislative bodies are mainly engaged when they seem to be legislating, is the management of a coming political campaign ; and the noise and confusion, apparently signifying nothing, that occupy so much of their time, have really an important significance, since they are the mingled sound of the trumpets and of the shouting of the captains, stirring up the scattered legions to gather for the fray.

Our actual government, therefore, though republican in

form, is in its substance a democracy ; differing only from a pure democracy in the fact that the voice of the people is expressed not directly but ministerially—that is, by the intervention of authorized agents. It is probably only owing to the vast magnitude of the body politic, and the wide extent of territory over which it is scattered, that the ministerial form is not abandoned, and every question of public policy submitted at once to popular arbitrament, and decided summarily by the popular vote. This would be in strict conformity with the spirit which has ruled the political world in our country ever since the century began ; and which has found its expression and produced its practical results in such measures as the removal of all the limitations which once existed in all the original States to the universality of the suffrage, the curtailment of the appointing power, and the substitution of popular election for executive discretion in the choice of all public officers, including judges of the highest grade. Perhaps no more striking example of the operation of this spirit can be found than is furnished by the complete frustration in practice of the seemingly ingenious scheme of the constitution designed to remove the choice of a President of the United States to the farthest possible distance from the people, and to intrust it to the untrammelled judgment of independent electors chosen for their pre-eminent fitness to exercise this high responsibility. So careful were the framers of the constitution to guard against the possibility of bias in the minds of these electors, that they inserted into the constitution a provision disqualifying from the exercise of such a function all members of the national legislature, and every person holding an office of trust or profit under the government, no matter how insignificant. Practically we know that the electors appointed under this scheme

are shorn of all independence, and debarred from the exercise of any discretion whatever in the casting of their ballots. The ticket they are to vote is prescribed to them even before their own election ; and their action is so purely mechanical that it might just as well be discharged by a convention of ingeniously contrived automata. The careful safeguards against bias have no longer any significance ; for no matter what the personal bias of the individual elector may be, it cannot in the slightest degree influence his official acts. Yet we see the solemn farce still maintained of a reverence for forms from which the substance has gone out ; and the whole country is agitated, and the peace of the union imperilled, in a controversy over the question whether some particular elector, at the time of his nomination, had not held the important and lucrative office of village postmaster or deputy marshal to a federal court.

If therefore statecraft has not ceased to exist in the United States—that is to say, if we have still among us a class of men whose profounder knowledge and larger wisdom fit them better for the business of legislation and the duties of administration than the majority of their fellow-citizens—it is safe to say that such science and such men do not control the course of our public affairs. Our public policy bears the stamp of the average wisdom of the people, as it is the expression of their will.

Now there are very few of the questions which arise in the political arena which are not environed with difficulties. There are few of which a plain man of limited information and moderate capacity would be likely to arrive independently at the most judicious solution. There are few which are not more or less embarrassing to the best-educated men, and on which there are not important differences of opinion even among those who have

studied them most profoundly. But the differences of experts are differences for which they can assign reasons, and in regard to which, by discussion, they may possibly arrive at agreement ; while the differences of common and ignorant minds are haphazard differences, determined sometimes by prejudice, sometimes by blind subservience to party, sometimes by self-conceit and the pride of opinion ; for it is particularly noticeable that men are confident of their own judgment in political affairs just in proportion as their knowledge is less and as their means of judging are more imperfect.

Look at a few of these questions which are continually in agitation in one form or another before the public, and are in one form or another continually the subjects of demands for new legislation. We find among them, for example, *money and the currency, taxation, free trade and protection, the public credit, the limits of state and national sovereignty, internal improvements, subsidies, monopolies, labor and capital, race prejudice, the navigation laws, free elections, honest elections*, and many more. Examine any one of these—taxation, for instance. See how, under this general question, subordinate questions immediately arise : How may taxation be most equitably distributed ? Should personal property be taxed ? If so, what is personal property ? How shall corporations be taxed ? If on their visible property, how about the certificates of stock which represent this visible property ? Shall mortgaged property be taxed ? If so, shall the mortgage be taxed also ? Shall incomes be taxed ? No proposition carries with it a stronger *primâ facie* semblance of equity. But how shall incomes be ascertained ? And is the same rule to be applied to a stipend which dies with the individual, and to interest on loans or rents of real estate, which are practically perpetual annuities ?

Also, if real estate under lease is directly taxed as property, should the rent of real estate be a second time taxed as income?

The question of taxation involves the more complicated question of customs-duties. This with all governments is a favorite form of taxation, because the burden which it imposes is unconsciously borne. The subordinate questions which it presents are endless. Considered merely as a system of taxation, without regard to its influence on other interests, the aim of course should be so to adjust the tariff as to raise the largest revenue with the least cost for collection, and in the manner least oppressive to the people. Will this end be accomplished by a uniform rate of duty upon all imported commodities? Experience says not. What principle then should govern in the discriminations admitted? Should a heavier impost fall upon the luxuries than upon the necessities of life? Will not the object be secured just as effectually and much more simply by confining taxation to a few articles of large but necessary consumption, leaving all others free? Granting this, should articles capable of being so richly productive of revenue as tea and coffee be excluded from the list because they are in so general use, and in order, to use the language of the philanthropic demagogue, to secure to the workingman the blessing of "a free breakfast table"? If for this reason tea and coffee are exempt, shall the same reason avail for sugar and salt, which seem to be as necessary to the free breakfast table as tea and coffee?

Here we strike the rock.

We cannot touch the subject of taxation upon importations without bringing up another and a larger and a still more vexed one—the expediency of excluding the products of foreign industry from free competition in our

markets with those of our own country. It is pleasant to talk about a free breakfast table when the tea of China or Japan is in question, or the coffee of Java or Rio ; but when we speak of the sugar of Havana or the salt of the Bahamas, the freedom of the breakfast table suddenly loses its interest in Louisiana and New York.

What has been said on the subject of taxation is designed only as an illustration of the difficulty presented by the questions of state policy which are constantly in agitation before the people, and which, under our system of government, must be ultimately decided, wisely or unwisely, by the majority of voices. Is it not of the highest importance that they should not be decided wholly by chance or caprice, or by the influence of delusions artfully imposed upon ignorance by designing demagogues ? Is it not desirable that the people shall be so educated that they may, at least to some extent, understand these things, and cast their votes under the dictates of a sober judgment and not of a blind impulse ? Moreover, if these questions are difficult—confessedly so difficult that even the men of largest knowledge are not at one in regard to them—is there any degree of education which it is practicable for the State to enforce upon its citizens, in providing for which it would not be directly promoting the objects for which governments are constituted ? All human wisdom is indeed imperfect, and if it were possible that an entire people should be subjected to the highest degree of education which it is in fact the privilege only of the favored few to enjoy, it does not follow that their legislation might not be sometimes mistaken. Grant this, yet, in the circumstances supposed, such mistakes would be comparatively rare, and minds trained to connect effects with causes would soon detect them and apply the necessary remedies. But a chief benefit of such supposed large

and general culture would be its power to prevent the suggestion, or at least the mischievous propagation, of wild and visionary, not to say dangerous and disorganizing, political schemes and theories, such as are continually disturbing the peace of our country and menacing the security of its institutions—schemes and theories against which we have constantly to wage an uphill fight, chiefly against ignorance, but also against the malignant passions that ignorance engenders. An universal culture of this high character is of course in the nature of things impossible. But when in this world, as is generally the case, the *summum bonum* in any direction is beyond our reach, we are not justified in neglecting to do what we can to approach it. An imperfect education is better than no education at all. Partial information is better than total ignorance. And any degree of culture prepares the mind to receive with greater profit the further instruction which may come with experience and observation, or through the teachings of the press, or through the continual discussions of public questions which are always going on before the people between men who have made them a study.

What the State therefore should do for education should be limited only by the possibilities which the nature of the problem presents. The question should not be how little it need do, but how much it can do. It need do nothing at all, if we want nothing more than that there should be a government; it should omit nothing that it is practicable to do, if we desire also that there may be a good government.

We come then to the question, How much can the State do for education, and how can it best do it?

Before replying, let us first observe that a great deal of the knowledge possessed by men in adult life, no matter

how limited or how extended may have been their education in youth, is self-acquired knowledge. Furthermore, much of their power of acquisition—that is, of the facility with which they apply their powers to the discovery of truth—comes from the discipline of experience, and not from that of the schools. It is strictly true, therefore, that all men are more or less self-educated ; and that it is after all more from the education they owe to themselves, than from that which they derive from schools, that the degree to which they are able to make themselves felt in their generation is due. More than that—even of the education they receive from schools, much the greater part is their own work. The schools furnish them the opportunities for doing this work, and the teachers are their guides in doing it ; but that their own agency in the result is after all the essential thing, is manifest from the fact that these influences operate very differently upon different individuals, profiting some very greatly, and others hardly at all.

But to self-education, whether in or out of schools, certain elementary instrumentalities are necessary. These are written and printed letters and other characters significant of ideas. The ability to read opens to the seeker after knowledge the accumulated stores of all the centuries ; and assuming him to have time and disposition, and in the outset some judicious guidance in the choice of books, there is no limit to the extent to which he may push his acquisitions. But the danger is, and the probability is, that the immature learner, pursuing thus a course of independent study, will read superficially, immethodically, and without frequently and carefully recalling and restating in his own mind the facts of knowledge he has acquired. His knowledge is thus liable to become a confused knowledge, or a half knowledge, incapable, for want

of precision, of useful application ; and the reflex effect of his mental labor upon the faculties it calls into exercise, will not be likely to promote their vigor, or increase his power to concentrate and control them. It is partly to prevent these consequences, but chiefly to insure that the young, after learning to read, shall read at all—or at any rate shall read the books which they ought to read—that schools are provided, and that schools are necessary. The function of the teacher is to direct the reading, to enforce its thoroughness, and to ascertain the resultant effects which it leaves in the mind of the learner ; correcting these where necessary, or putting the pupil in the way to correct them himself. For I hold that, in training, the business of the preceptor is not so much to teach (in the ordinary sense) as to make the child learn. I mean by this that when the facts of knowledge which the child is expected to acquire are capable of deduction from facts he knows already, he should be led to reach them through this process of deduction, and not be furnished with them ready made, as isolated facts of information. Nor should the teacher unnecessarily unfold to him the successive steps of this deduction. If the pupil's powers of analysis and synthesis, of comparison and logical arrangement, are ever to be independently useful, he must begin to use them independently in the earliest stages of his education. Hence I am by no means disposed invariably to concur in the eulogies I hear bestowed upon popular teachers because of their practice of making every knotty point in their lessons clear to their pupils by copious explanation. I would much rather hear of their success in making their pupils find their way out of their perplexities for themselves. That a good teacher will possess in a high degree the power of clear exposition may be taken for granted ; but

that he should use this power in order to relieve the learner of the wholesome task of self-instruction, is a very different and is a very inadvisable thing. In virtue of this power, the good teacher will be aware through what process of thought his pupil must pass in order to reach the conclusion desired ; and his skill as an educator will be shown in so presenting the materials as to turn the thought in the right direction.

In speaking thus, I am of course intending my observations to apply to that early stage of the educational process, where the objective facts of knowledge acquired are of less value to the learner than the subjective results which attend the process of acquisition. At the later stage, at which the purpose is rather to inform than to discipline the mind, that teacher is undoubtedly the best who is capable of conveying the largest amount of information in the most succinct form, and who therefore possesses in the highest degree the power of clear exposition.

To return—since without the knowledge of letters and numbers the process of self-education cannot go on, it will be questioned by no one who allows the State to have any duty in the case, that every citizen should be taught to read and write at the public expense. Here, in the view of many, the duty of the State is ended. But this sort of instruction is not education ; it is providing only the implements of education. The objector admits this fact, but claims, on the other hand, that when the State puts the individual in condition to educate himself, he must be himself responsible for the failure if he is not educated. More fully stated the contention is as follows : It is impossible to compress into the compass of a few brief months or years (which is all that, in the case of the average citizen, can be given to education) such an amount

of useful information as may qualify an individual to understand the various complicated questions which arise in political life. If, therefore, such knowledge is to be acquired at all, it must be acquired through the processes of self-education ; and when the State has furnished the citizen with the instrumentalities necessary for this, she has done all that can reasonably be demanded. His failure to make the acquisition, should he fail, may be a misfortune, but this misfortune is not the fault of the State.

Others, looking at the subject in a slightly different light, reach the same conclusion by a different process of reasoning. The State, they say, imposes on its citizens certain duties, and subjects them to certain restraints, all of which are expressed in its written laws. Though these laws are printed and widely published, their publication is of no avail to those who cannot read. It is unjust to subject men to penalties for disobedience to laws which they know nothing about, and which they have no means of knowing. Therefore the State should see to it that every citizen is able to read and write ; and then, if any one neglects to know what the law is, and infringes its provisions through ignorance, his ignorance is criminal, and if he suffers in consequence, his suffering is just.

This argument is defective in several respects. If, as the argument admits, it is morally wrong to make men suffer for violations of laws which they have no means of knowing, it does not correct the wrong merely to provide the means of knowing, so long as they are sure to continue in ignorance that there are any such laws, or that it is their duty to know them. In the case of the man who cannot read, ignorance of the law is attributable to a material obstacle ; in that of one who can read, but without any purposed neglect does not—because, for instance, he

never heard of the laws, doesn't know where to find them, is unaware that they concern him, or for any other of twenty similar reasons—like ignorance may be attributed to a moral obstacle cutting him off just as effectually. If then the State has a responsibility in the first case, why not in the second? The argument is therefore defective in assuming that by teaching men to read, the State discharges herself of an obligation, when the fact is that by doing so she only changes the form of the obligation. It is consequently an argument which, if it proves anything, proves that the State should do a great deal more than the thing proposed—should in fact teach laws rather than letters—and which, by the same rule, demonstrates that to teach letters will be no longer obligatory, when the laws are taught without them.

But, once more, the argument rests on a fallacy. It assumes that the citizen who fails to acquaint himself with the letter of the written law is always in danger of incurring through ignorance some serious penalty. If this is true, who of us is safe? Who is there in this assembly who can truly say that he has read the written laws of his country? If you gentlemen, Regents of the University of the State of New York, presidents and professors of colleges, principals and instructors of our higher seminaries of learning—if you gentlemen cannot claim familiarity with the two or three hundred volumes of statutes at large which have gone forth from the high place where we are assembled to-day—how can it be supposed that the humble citizen, whose education begins and ends with the knowledge of printed characters, and with the ability to read with difficulty, will know these things any better than you? And if he is in peril through ignorance, how happens it that you are not so equally?

The fact is that none of us are in any such danger. The

general laws to which serious penalties are attached are laws concerning acts which we do not need to be told are wrong. They are the *nota in se* concerning whose character conscience is a better authority than any written code. Conscience may not indeed distinguish, as the statute does, between their degrees of turpitude, or inform us what degree of disgrace, or how many years of penal servitude, each may draw after it; but conscience will tell us what is much better than that, that we must not do any of them at all.

This argument therefore for limiting the education provided for the people by the State to the inculcation of the merest rudiments of knowledge, is wholly fallacious. If there were no reason but this why the State should concern itself with popular education, there would be no reason at all.

But it is argued again that the ability to read and write contributes materially to the intelligent transaction of business, and that this is true in every walk of life; therefore that the State should exact and enforce education to this extent, because to this extent it is equally profitable to every citizen, and the liberality of the government is justified by the impartiality of the distribution. It has however been already pointed out that the argument which infers the duty of the State from the benefit of education to individuals cannot be maintained. To care for the interests of individuals as such is no part of the business of the government. Men get along through life who cannot read. They could doubtless get along better if they could read; but why on this account should the State help them?

The proper form of this argument, however, is not to present it as a question of individual interest, but of individual efficiency as a factor in the strength of the com-

monwealth. In this sense, the increase of individual efficiency is a public benefit. The joint resultant of the increased efficiency of all is to lift a people higher in the scale of civilization, to stimulate among them the progress of the arts, to diversify and perfect their industries, to increase their power of production, and thus to secure for them larger material resources, more abundant comfort and consequently greater happiness at home, while commanding for them at the same time greater respect abroad. Whatever thus contributes to the general prosperity of a people, contributes to its security against aggression, and strengthens the hands of its government in the discharge of its essential functions, especially of that which consists in providing for the common defence.

But if upon this ground we can argue in favor of elementary education, the same reasoning will justify us in going much further. If merely to possess the rudiments of knowledge, or if only to have command of the implements by which knowledge is acquired, is so to increase the efficiency of individual industry as sensibly, where such knowledge is general, to advance the general prosperity, there can be no doubt that every larger acquisition similarly diffused must be attended with analogous results to a more marked degree. The ability to read is undoubtedly a valuable accomplishment ; but to read with profit one should have some such antecedent knowledge as to enable him to read understandingly. What ideas, for example, are likely to be gathered from the columns of a daily journal by one who is ignorant of the geographical divisions of the earth ; of the varieties of climate and production of different regions ; of the population, degree of civilization, political importance, and military strength of different nations ; of the forms of government, peculiarities of religion, and social institutions prevailing in other lands ;

of the state of the arts, manufactures and commercial relations, and the nature of the ruling industries among different peoples ; or to what extent is such reading likely to profit one to whom Rome is a town in the interior of the State of New York, and Waterloo a station on the New York Central Railway ; or to whom, finally, the names of Shakespeare and Milton, and Napoleon and Wellington, and Gladstone and Disraeli, and even perhaps Washington and Franklin and Jefferson and Jackson are so many unmeaning sounds ? If individual effectiveness depends on individual intelligence, if the products of industry are better (and more abundant in proportion as the judgment which guides its operations is more and more enlightened by cultivation, then it is plain that no limit ought to be placed to the extent to which the State should provide for the education of every citizen, but that which the nature of the problem itself imposes. By this I mean to say that we are not to discriminate between studies as in their own nature suitable or unsuitable to be taught in our schools. No kind of useful knowledge is unsuitable, if we have room for it. In fact, if the potentiality of benefit to the body politic is to be our only criterion in judging of the extent proper to be given to our teaching, leaving out of view possible differences of intrinsic value between different descriptions of knowledge, then, whether by the term benefit we understand a moral or a material benefit, there can be no doubt that the advantage relinquished for every subject of study rejected, is greater than that secured by any one of those retained. This is true because the benefits of mental culture increase in geometrical ratio, while the instrumentalities of such culture are increased only arithmetically ; so that, as I have said before, if it were possible that a whole people could one and all receive the same high

mental training which in the actual state of things falls to the lot of only the few, the advantage to the State would be beyond computation. We are not then to draw a line among the various possible subjects of study, and say that these are fit and proper by reason of anything in their own nature to be taught in our public schools, and these are not. If there is to be a selection (and inexorable conditions, such as limitation of the time at command, may require this), we may properly indicate an order of choice, because some subjects are more directly practical than others, and some are auxiliary to all others; but when finally our line is drawn, we must say—these on this side we include because we can make room for them; the rest we exclude because unfortunately we cannot.

If I am asked where such a line should be drawn, I reply that that is a practical question which could not be answered here without going into a detail inappropriate to this place. I may suggest, however, one or two governing principles which must be borne in mind in drawing it. First, the comprehensiveness of the course of instruction must bear some due proportion to the time it is to occupy. That time should be as great as possible, but experience has perhaps settled what is possible in the case. The law should fix a minimum time, and up to that minimum should make attendance compulsory, specifying for this purpose the limiting ages. Secondly, it must be borne in mind that, while many things may be taught if circumstances allow, some things must be taught. Practical utility must here take precedence even of intrinsic value. Reading, spelling, writing, and arithmetic will of course lead all the rest. After these will follow geography, physical, political and statistical; then the outlines of history, particularly the history of our own country. To this I would add a succinct summary of the prin-

ciples of civil government in its various forms ; but chiefly those of our own constitution and the duties of the citizen under it ; above all the supreme duty, in every vote he gives, to vote for principles and not for men. The beneficial effect of the inculcation of this idea in the morning of life, before the blood has been heated in the excitements of political conflict, would be incalculable. There, if I were compelled to believe that nothing else could be admitted unless to the prejudice of these, I should say we must stop. But I believe there is room for much more ; and in this belief I would propose to give the child some systematic knowledge of the objects by which he is surrounded in the natural world—of the elements in short of natural history ; of the structure of his own body, and the functions of its organs—that is, of anatomy and physiology ; of the properties of matter, and of the laws of force—that is, of physics, mechanics, and chemistry. In saying this I wish not to be misunderstood. I would not of course attempt the absurdity of teaching these vast subjects exhaustively. I would confine the instruction to elementary facts which can be definitely stated ; and which, besides being practically useful, might serve as a foundation on which the learner might build, as opportunity should favor, in the future.

In addition to these subjects, room should also, in my view, by all means be made for vocal music, an exercise suited to serve rather as a recreation than as a task, and by periodically relieving the strain upon the mental powers, to quicken their activity while at work. For reasons very similar, I would add the art of drawing ; which is further recommended by the fact that there is hardly a walk of life in which the possession of such an accomplishment is not capable of many useful and valuable applications.

I am not, however, proposing a course of common school study. I am only specifying subjects which it seems to be not impracticable to teach in common schools. Of grammar I have said nothing, because I doubt the usefulness of synthetic methods in presenting difficult abstractions to the minds of the young ; but instead of this I would teach the English language, by methods of a practical character ; such, for instance, as the construction of sentences, the comparison of correct and faulty forms of expression, practice in epistolary writing, and in simple narrative and descriptive composition, and the reading of selections from good authors on topics of familiar knowledge.

But in any system of instruction, primary or superior, it is not enough to prescribe what shall be taught or how much shall be taught—the question *how* these things shall be taught is one of even higher importance. By this I mean that the benefit derived from schools depends perhaps even more upon the teacher than upon the substance of the teaching. It is an unfortunate fact that, in the business of instruction, incompetency may conceal itself and inefficiency escape detection more easily than in most other employments. It requires no extraordinary ability nor any great mental effort on the part of the tutor to assign tasks in text-books, and to go through, with becoming dignity, the process which is called “ hearing recitation.” Moreover, in these exercises time may be so well filled up as to make it seem that the teacher has really contributed something to the progress of his pupil, although all that he has done has been to listen to a form of words repeated by rote. Now a teacher who is really a teacher must be a positive force in the educational process. And, as I have said before, he must have that peculiar skill which shows itself in the power to

make the pupil think. This with many is a gift of nature, others acquire it by experience, but all find that it is perfected with time.

One important condition, therefore, of the usefulness of the teacher is that he shall be permanent. If I am rightly informed, this remark suggests the weak point in our system of common school education at this time. The position of teacher in the elementary schools is, I am told, very generally sought by young persons who are conscious of no special aptness for it or predilection towards it; who have neither desire nor design to become teachers by profession; who seek this employment, in fact, only as a temporary means of subsistence on which to rely while they are looking round for something better—fitting themselves perhaps for professional life, or waiting to make up their minds without motive therefore to improve themselves in an art which they are not likely to practise long enough to make improvement an object; and with every temptation to lapse into a dull routine and rest contented in a perfunctory discharge of duty. This is a serious evil. It ought to be prevented if possible. There might perhaps be a rule to prohibit the engagement of persons as teachers, who make no secret of their intention not in any proper sense to be teachers. I fear, however, that the evil lies too deep to be reached by such a rule, or by any mere rule of administration. I fear that the real difficulty in the case, when looked into, will be found in the inadequacy of the compensation which the teachers in general in our common schools receive. No man of ability can be expected to give up the best years of his life to an occupation by which he barely lives, and which, however long and faithfully he may serve in it, holds out no promise that he shall ever live any better. If we

would have permanent teachers we must pay for permanence, just as, if we would have good teachers, we must pay for excellence. In the educational no less than in the commercial world, equivalency of values must be the rule of all exchanges. The fact that in our common schools—I do not say invariably and everywhere, but in many places and often—the teacher is less liberally remunerated (and this not relatively, regard being had to the quality and dignity of the labor, and the time and cost of educating the laborer to his work, but positively in the actual amount of dollars and cents paid over and received) than journeyman carpenters, bricklayers, paviors, and stone masons in the city of New York, is a fact which draws after it its inevitable consequences, inferiority of qualification, lack of zeal, perpetual change.

I think it quite certain that no class of public servants—taken, I mean, as a class; there are no doubt exceptional cases—are so ill-compensated as teachers. No class, on the other hand, render services of higher value to the public; nor is there any class whose competency, whose efficiency, whose fidelity, and whose devotion to their work more deeply concern the public. If liberal compensation is necessary to secure the services of good and capable men as educators of the children of the people, then such liberality is an infinitely higher benefit to the public that pays than to the individuals who receive the pay. For it is not only a dictate of common sense, but a truth deduced from the experience of all time, that no investment pays more richly than that which makes its return in the treasures of cultivated intellect. Were I then asked to say in what manner, in my opinion, a people could most strikingly illustrate the economical policy which consists in saving the pence at

the expense of the pounds, I should answer—by starving the teachers of their children.

But supposing that the State leaves us nothing to complain of on the score of liberality, what shall be our security that its munificence may not be misapplied—that is to say, assuming the provisions to be quite adequate to command the best talents and the highest attainments, how shall we guard against the danger that inferior men may after all secure the benefit of these provisions? No teacher in any educational institution, from the highest to the lowest, ought to be engaged, unless upon satisfactory testimonials from competent authorities; or unless, in rare instances, upon the still more satisfactory evidence of established celebrity. For our common schools this point has been carefully guarded by the provisions of our existing laws. Local officers, styled commissioners, elected by the people, are charged with the duty of testing the qualifications of candidates for appointment. The certificate of the commissioner is evidence of the eligibility of the candidate. The system is simple; it ought to be sufficient; but if I am correctly informed, it has one point of weakness. The tenure by which the commissioner holds his office is a source of embarrassment, and makes him liable to a kind of pressure which interferes with his independence. If he is rigorously conscientious, he is liable to be undermined and displaced to make room for some one less scrupulous. The result is that his certificates are sometimes wrung from him in cases where his judgment tells him they are undeserved; and the security intended by the law breaks down. It is true we have a chief of the Department, or State Superintendent of Public Instruction, who might, if he pleased, enforce upon his subordinates the exercise of a rigor which, in the absence of such support, they

hesitate to employ ; but unfortunately the state superintendent is hampered by similar influences, and subject to the same dangers.

What is wanted is that this matter should be placed in the control of some intelligent and permanent body of men, having the independence that permanence in office only can insure ; a body serving without emolument, and therefore disinterested ; a body well educated and conversant with the business of education, and therefore entirely competent ; a body composed of men of high character and distinguished eminence, and therefore possessing something of the dignity and commanding something like the respect which is accorded to judges on the bench. Certainly if, in the administration of justice, it is desirable that there shall be some assurance of permanence, some security for independence, some immunity from the disturbances of factious agitation, some distance of removal from the arena of popular excitements, some exemption from the hazards that wait on popular caprice, all these things are quite as desirable in the management and direction of a process so momentous in its objects, so complicated in its machinery, so widely extended in its operations, and so universal in the interests it involves, as the education of a people. In the organization of such a directing body, permanence next to respectability is the characteristic which takes precedence in importance of every other ; for in educational matters a policy which may not be absolutely the best, if steadily and consistently pursued is better than one which is always changing, whatever may be the merit of its successive phases. To change a policy from year to year is as bad as to change text-books from year to year ; a practice undeniably bad, though each new book may be better than the one discarded ; and bad for the reason that we

do not after all want to teach books but subjects, and it is quite possible to teach subjects, and teach them well, without any books at all. That the doctrine here affirmed is in accordance with the common sense of mankind, is manifest from the example of the higher institutions of learning ; of which all without any exception are placed under the administration of supervisory boards whose members hold their places in permanence, or of which the changes are so gradual as to be practically insensible.

The Board of Regents of this University is precisely such a body as I have had in mind in these remarks. It is a body already in existence ; its organic law insures its permanence ; it is composed of precisely the right kind of men, thoroughly educated, conversant with educational affairs, personally and justly eminent, and by long experience in the supervision of the superior education of the State familiar with all the practical details of administrative duty. To extend its care to the primary education also would be to introduce unity in place of diversity, and to consolidate the entire educational system of the State into one complete and perfect whole.

Nor in making this change would it be necessary that the present organization of the common school system should be in any essential particular changed. Let the organization stand, but transfer simply to the Regents the authority to appoint the functionaries who now receive office from the Legislature or from local constituencies. Let the Regents prescribe the tests to which aspirant teachers shall be subjected. Let the commissioners appointed by them apply these tests, as they will then be able to do, fearlessly and independently, and the evils which have been signalized as inseparable from the system in its present form, will at once disappear.

How far the proposition here made may be acceptable

to this Board of Regents, I have not inquired and am unadvised. Should it be thought to increase too largely the burden of their responsibility, there remains the alternative expedient of creating another and parallel body, a State Board of Education, for example, having the same relation to the system of primary education which the Board of Regents sustains to the secondary and superior. To either of these proposals I can see no objection ; to the continuance of the present system unmodified I can see many.

I have thus endeavored to present my views as to the duty of the State in regard to popular education, resting them on what seem to me to be rational and logical grounds. Without venturing to anticipate for them universal concurrence, I still think that they will find approval in the educational, if not in the political, world.

The subject of the higher education comes next in order. Recurring to what has been said of the importance to the efficiency of schools of well qualified teachers, it is hardly necessary to say that to insure the supply of such teachers is a matter of precisely equal importance ; nor to add that such supply cannot be looked for from the elementary schools themselves. If it is true that the art of the teacher consists not so much in imparting information as in stimulating thought and guiding the process of thinking, then it is true that the accomplished teacher must possess a culture much higher than the highest level to which he can hope to lift his pupil. In this consideration we find a suggestion of the necessity, and a justification of the policy, of creating institutions for the express purpose of forming teachers. This is only to adopt in our warfare against ignorance, the most dangerous of foes to the progress or even the maintenance of civilization, the same policy which our national government pur-

sues in training up men competent to direct its operations of offence or defence against its foreign enemies. Our state has not been regardless of its duty in this respect. We have numerous admirable examples of the class of institutions here indicated. The state has also acted wisely in enlisting in the same work the numerous well-appointed and ably conducted academies under the supervision of this Board of Regents, by providing for the formation in these, of classes expressly for the training of teachers. These numerous schools of secondary instruction, which dot at nearly equal intervals the surface of our wide territory, though chiefly the creation of private effort, constitute an element in our educational system of inappreciable value. Besides contributing in the manner just described to maintain the character of the schools below, they afford to many thousands of the youth of our state, prevented by circumstances from resorting to the higher institutions, educational advantages in many cases almost equal to those of the colleges themselves; and their influence in elevating the standard of general intelligence in the State is far-reaching and powerful. They fill up all the wide interval between the elementary education which is universal, and the so-called liberal education to which hardly one in two or three thousand aspires. In regard to them the State has therefore an important duty to fulfil. It should see that they are sufficiently numerous to be everywhere within reach of the people, should contribute to their support so far as is necessary to guaranty their educational respectability, and should so far control their operations and supervise their methods as to insure their efficient management.

In addition to this, though these schools will necessarily be for the comparatively few, and cannot, therefore, with propriety be made in the ordinary sense free, I

should esteem it a judicious policy in the State to provide that the deserving whom indigence would otherwise debar from their benefits, and who aspire to a higher culture than they can obtain in the elementary schools, should have access to them free of charge—a policy which might be wisely extended to the colleges also.

Toward the institutions of the highest grade, the colleges, the policy of the State must be determined by similar considerations. The colleges are necessary to complete and crown the edifice of the educational system. They furnish the teachers to the schools of secondary grade, as these last in turn furnish teachers to the primary. If therefore no colleges were spontaneously to arise, it would be incumbent on the State to create them. In general, however, the creation of colleges at the state charge, and for distinctly state purposes, is unnecessary. But one example, so far as my information extends, exists in our country, in which a college established by the State is also maintained by the State as a recognized organ of the government, by annual appropriations in the civil list ; and that is the University, formerly called the College, of South Carolina. In most of the states, however, which have been formed out of territory once belonging to the United States, state universities exist, liberally endowed by the Federal Government, and directly subject to legislative control. Yale College and Harvard University were both created and endowed by the colonial legislatures of the states to which they respectively belong ; and till quite recently, in each case, the state retained a representation in the supervisory board.

But however it may have been expedient or necessary in earlier times to create colleges by State authority and by the exercise of state munificence, as an indispensable

part of the educational machinery of the State itself, the present need seems to be rather to restrain than to foster the multiplication of such institutions. We have too many colleges, and not too few. The excessive multiplication of these institutions is not only not a good, but is a very positive evil ; because, as the number increases, the average strength diminishes, with an effect upon the average quality of collegiate instruction as unfortunate as it is unavoidable.

There are some well ascertained and interesting facts bearing on this question which are believed not to be generally known. The common impression probably is that to multiply the number of colleges in the country increases correspondingly, or if not correspondingly at least to some degree, the number of college students in the country. But this is a mistake. Statistics prove it to be a total mistake. The aggregate number of students attending all the colleges in the country put together, bears a pretty steady ratio to the total population of the country, a ratio which remains practically unaltered, however the number of colleges may vary. Practically unaltered, I say, but I am sorry to be obliged to add that this statement is not strictly true ; and that, when distant periods are compared, the proportion of students to population, in spite of the multiplication of colleges in the meantime, appears gradually to diminish.

Taking the country through, the aggregate number of students, candidates for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, in our colleges, is to the total population of the country, nearly in the ratio of one to twenty-five hundred. Less than half a century ago it was not far from one to two thousand. In half a century the population has increased nearly fourfold, the number of colleges threefold, and the aggregate number of the students in arts in all

the colleges put together, but little more than twofold. These figures speak for themselves.

Now colleges are costly establishments, endowed chiefly by private munificence ; and liberality in this direction, as in every other, has its limit, which cannot be overdrawn. *Many* colleges therefore, being interpreted, means *feeble* colleges ; feeble, whether as it respects the attendance they can attract, or the material resources they can command.

On the other hand, when the large expenditure has been incurred which is necessary to equip properly a college for one hundred students, this college may just as well receive two hundred ; and but a very moderate addition to the outlay will suffice to fit it for a thousand.

Now let us take the present aggregate population of the country, irrespective of color, which is probably not below forty-five millions. At the ratio of one to twenty-five hundred, the whole country furnishes at this moment but eighteen thousand undergraduate students in arts. How many colleges are needed for these ? At two hundred students in a college, ninety. At five hundred, which would be much better, thirty-six—hardly one to a State. But we have actually more than four hundred.

The educational statistics from which these inferences are drawn are the results of a long continued and laborious inquiry conducted by myself personally. If a test of their trustworthiness is demanded, it may be found in the returns made to the Regents of the University from the colleges of our own State. It matters not what year we select. One will answer as well as another. I choose the latest published, the returns for the year 1877. In that year the number of male students in arts present in all the colleges of the State—sixteen in number—amounted in the aggregate to eighteen hundred and fifty-five. But

assuming the population of the State to be five millions, which does not overstate it, the ratio of one to twenty-five hundred should give her two thousand. The returns, I admit, do not take account of the young men belonging to our state who may be in attendance in the colleges of other states, nor of the probably smaller number from other states who are present in ours ; but on the other hand they fail likewise to take account of the very large proportion of the students enrolled as collegiate students in the College of the City of New York who do not proceed nor intend to proceed to degrees in arts, and whose number is much more than sufficient to counterbalance any difference against us in the comparison of interstate exchanges.

If this test proves anything, it proves that the ratio of one to twenty-five hundred is too high and not too low. This is only to say that it more than confirms the previously stated deductions drawn from a more general inquiry.

Some advantages are claimed to result from the multiplication of colleges. It is fair to consider these. The first is that, by such multiplication, colleges are brought nearer to those who need them, and are reached with less expenditure of money and of time. This argument might have had weight fifty years ago ; it has very little now. If there were but one college in a state, and if every student should attend the college of his own state, hardly one anywhere need be separated from his home by twenty-four hours. If, on the other hand, a college were provided for every two or three hundred students, and if these were equidistantly distributed through the country, the question of time would cease to have any significance. Large as is the present number of our colleges, nine students out of ten, perhaps ninety-nine in a hundred, have

to travel to reach them. If we had but one quarter as many, the average time of travel would hardly be increased an hour.

Another reason of greater weight than the foregoing in favor of the multiplication of colleges, or at least of the increase of the number beyond the educational necessity, is found in the fact that every religious denomination regards it as a duty, if not an indispensable necessity, to provide for the youth of its own persuasion all the machinery of the superior education. This sense of obligation seems to be not in the least diminished by a consideration of the fact that the class-room instruction in all colleges, whether state or denominational, is strictly secular. The religious influences exerted by such colleges, so far as there are any which are distinctly definable, result from the observance of peculiar forms in the daily devotional exercises of the academic community, or from the direct inculcation of characteristic doctrines during public worship, as conducted in the college chapel on the Sabbath—that is, from the maintenance at college of the same influences to which the youth is subject at home. There is, however, something more than this, though it is something not so distinctly definable. The mysterious force of sympathy whereby men, whether young or old, enlisted under a common banner, and associated together in numbers, react upon each other, encourage each other, confirm and strengthen each other in their views, their convictions, their aspirations, their zeal, exerts an influence of incalculable power in intensifying the spirit of religious fellowship. Thus the denominational college benefits the denomination which maintains it, not so much by teachings directed to the understanding, as by more subtle influences appealing to the heart. With some of these, how-

ever, are associated proper theological schools, and these are instrumentalities of a more positive character.

Another cause determining the multiplication of colleges, which is without the same justification, is found in the ambition—a very laudable one—of thriving towns to build up within themselves all the appliances of the most advanced civilization. Public spirit, always a praiseworthy sentiment, is sometimes eager to create instrumentalities for good in advance of the necessity ; and when once a splendid enterprise has been projected, promising honor, *éclat*, and perhaps more material benefit, to the residents of the locality which its accomplishment is to illustrate, the imaginations of a whole community become excited, and local pride is stimulated to a degree which generally makes the first success comparatively easy. The misfortune is that the enthusiasm which is equal to the effort of initiating an undertaking of this character, seldom suffices to sustain it through the unavoidable difficulties of succeeding years ; so that a college which owes its birth to a generous impulse full of promise and cheer, may be destined only to add another to the many already existing examples of misplaced generosity and mistaken endeavor.

Now in what I have said of the multiplication of colleges I wish not to be misunderstood. I do not object to many colleges because they are many, nor to small colleges because they are small. If they are all equally good, and all really good, it matters not, educationally speaking, how many there are. We cannot have too much of a good thing. But that a college may be a good college, it must be well endowed ; for without ample resources it can neither possess the instrumentalities which are indispensable to thorough instruction, nor command the men most competent to use the instrumen-

talities. As I have said before, in education, as certainly as in commerce, quality will command its price.

My objection to the multiplication of colleges, therefore, rests upon the economical ground that, since the work these institutions have to do, which is a pretty definitely ascertainable amount, is the same whether there be many or few, the increase of the number, quality remaining the same, involves to the public a very large and quite unnecessary increase in the cost of doing it. But my objection goes further : with an undue multiplication of collegiate institutions, the human probability is that quality will not remain the same. And if it does not, then the public suffers not only in an economical but also in an educational sense.

But the evil resulting from this cause would not be so serious, if all our colleges were not clothed with university powers. The distinction is one so wholly disregarded in this country, that it would seem to be almost unknown. Colleges originally grew up as the organs of universities ; first to lodge, afterward to lodge and aid in teaching university students. They had nothing to do with degrees. The early continental colleges have chiefly perished ; the British survive. They are learned, wealthy and powerful, but they cannot confer degrees. Some French collegiate schools of more recent erection confer the degree of bachelor—no other.

Now all our colleges are universities. How stands their number to the population ? In the east it is bad enough. New York, with her sixteen colleges, has one to three hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants ; Massachusetts, with her seven, one to two hundred and thirty thousand ; Connecticut, with her three, one to two hundred thousand ; and Rhode Island, with a total population of two hundred and sixty thousand, has one

only. Further west it is much worse. Pennsylvania has twenty-nine colleges, or one to about one hundred and thirty-five thousand inhabitants; Illinois has thirty, or one to one hundred thousand; Tennessee, twenty-seven, or one to ninety-five thousand; Indiana and Missouri, each twenty-three, or one to ninety thousand; Ohio, thirty-seven, or one to eighty thousand; and Iowa, twenty-one, or one to seventy thousand.

The total number of colleges in all the states together is about four hundred and twenty-five, or one to a little more than one hundred thousand. When I say about, I mean as nearly as it is possible to find out. One would suppose, considering the high grade of these institutions—high at least in assumption—that no fact in all statistics ought to be more easily ascertainable than the number of colleges in the United States; yet so far is this from being the case, that the effort to arrive at the exact truth on the subject has baffled the most patient and most persevering industry of every investigator who has ever attempted it. What with the uprising of new and hopeful enterprises on the one hand, and the down-tumbling of older (not always old) and rickety concerns on the other, the absolute total for any given year is never certain, and for any two succeeding years is never the same. If the estimated number I have given is too large to-day (and I do not think it is), it will probably be too small before another year rolls round.

It is inconceivable that this great multitude of educational institutions, all calling themselves by a common name, all claiming to be equally the organs of the highest education the country affords, can be all of uniform merit, and all equally deserving of the confidence of the public. In fact, if we examine the roll of those who attend upon their teaching, we shall see that they cannot be;

for in very many instances the great mass of the students are, in age and in advancement, children, attending what is styled a preparatory course ; while a handful, numbering from half a dozen to twenty, are separately classified and grouped under what is pretentiously entitled the *Department of Arts*. These institutions are in fact merely secondary schools, which have been become seized with the ambition to add to their dignity by calling themselves colleges. There are, under the care of this Board of Regents, some three hundred academies, whose work is intrinsically better and of higher grade than that of half the institutions included in the list of American colleges published by the Bureau of Education at Washington.

In one of our largest western states, I am informed that, under a general law, any seven men who many associate themselves together and raise the pitiful sum of five thousand dollars, are authorized to constitute themselves a Board of Trustees, organize a college, and proceed to confer degrees in arts. The value of a degree conferred by such a body may be easily understood.

Now why should I concern myself, why should you concern yourselves, why should any of us concern ourselves about this eruption of feeble colleges, sham colleges, often mushroom colleges, breaking out in epidemic form all over the surface of the land ? Why not allow their founders, if it amuses them, to mimic academic ceremonial, and play at the annual manufacture of laureates, regular and honorary, without comment and without interference ? Simply because these laurels, which are thus lavishly scattered abroad, are the insignia, or at least have hitherto been the insignia, guaranty, stamp and attestation of genuine scholarship, awarded by the recognized representatives of the highest learning. To bestow them on so slight an assurance of deserving, to allow them

to be bestowed by self constituted authorities of no recognized standing or weight of personal character, is to pervert their intent, debase their value, and utterly destroy their significancy. To an American who has been accustomed to see these distinctions dispensed so lightly, and who is not in the least surprised to find, in every twentieth village he visits, a tribunal, neither august nor awe-inspiring, fully empowered to dispense them, it would be difficult to conceive or appreciate the value which was once attached to an academic degree in the Old World, and which clings to it there even yet. During the mediæval period an academic degree was almost equivalent to an order of nobility, or to a decoration bestowed by a monarch. We may perhaps be able to conceive the honor and deference which the stamp and seal of high erudition carried with it, by calling to mind the fact that a very little learning, even the mere ability to read and write, was sufficient to secure to its possessor exemption from the ordinary penalties of the criminal law.

Degrees were not originally instituted as titular distinctions—the purpose which they principally subserve at present—they were certificates of proficiency conveying the right, and imposing the duty, to teach in the institution conferring them. Hence, as the substance was more important than the name, the holder of the certificate was, in the earlier period of the history, invested with no title fixed by law, but was called indifferently a *licentiate*, a *master* (viz., of a school), or a *doctor*—that is to say, a teacher. The term *Arts* is simply the name given to the seven subjects of study taught in the schools of Charlemagne, and presumed in that day to embrace pretty much the whole circle of human knowledge—viz., the *trivium*, consisting of grammar, logic, and rhetoric ; and the *quadrivium*, of arithmetic, geometry, astronomy, and

music. The origin of the term bachelor is uncertain. By some it is supposed to be a corruption of the words *bas chevalier*, the lowest order of knighthood, as distinguished from the knight banneret ; by others, it is derived from the ceremonial of institution, in which a staff (*bacilla*) was placed in the hands of the proficient. As the laurel is the traditional emblem of triumph achieved, the recipient of the honor was styled *baccalaureatus*, or bachelor. So far as can be discovered, these names were, for a century or more, used interchangeably ; nor is it clearly settled precisely when and how they began to be distinctive of different orders of privilege ; but after the middle of the thirteenth century it is certain that the term bachelor was used to distinguish the imperfect graduate, whose authority to teach could only be exercised under the direction of a licentiate or master ; while the licentiate was invested with authority to teach independently. The distinction was somewhat similar to that which exists in American colleges between professor and tutor. The master was simply a licentiate of higher dignity but not of higher powers. The licentiate could be promoted to the master's degree on demand ; but the promotion was attended with expense. There being really no substantial difference between these two grades, the universities of the more recent centuries have generally disused one or the other. In Great Britain the degree of master continues to be conferred, but not that of licentiate ; France retains licentiate, but has dropped the degree of master. The term doctor, originally the synonyme of master, was in progress of time confined to the faculties of theology, of canon and civil law, and of medicine. It is chiefly from its later use as an honorary distinction that it has come, in our time, to be reckoned as the highest of the degrees in point of dignity. The doctorate in medi-

cine is an exception to this, for the reason that it has not been so used.

From this account of the origin of degrees it will naturally be inferred that they were not bestowed indiscriminately even upon proficient. They were conferred only on those who desired and designed to teach. Such was not the desire or design of the students generally. They did not go to the university to get degrees. They went to learn. The aggregate number of students in the mediæval universities was prodigious. At Paris, in the thirteenth century, it was no less than thirty thousand ; at Oxford at the same time it was equally great ; at Cambridge, hardly less. These British universities continued, down to the end of the sixteenth century, to maintain an attendance of fully five thousand each. As to the number of graduates, no published statistics are known to me except those given by Huber in his history of the British universities ; but these throw a great deal of light upon the question. He gives the number of bachelors and masters of arts annually made at Cambridge for one hundred and sixty years, beginning at A.D. 1500 ; and the number of bachelors made annually at Oxford for nearly the same period. From these tables I take the average of the first sixty years, being a period when the average attendance at each of these universities was about five thousand. Upon an average, thirty-four bachelors were made annually at Oxford and thirty-five at Cambridge, during the period specified. At Cambridge twenty-two masters were made annually on an average during the same period, and we may fairly infer that the average annual number at Oxford was the same.

Since then a university of five thousand students produced only twenty-two masters of arts per annum, we see how it happened that the duty to teach in the same

university, which accompanied the right to teach conferred by the degree, admitted of easy fulfilment. The multitude of students demanded a multitude of teachers, and the annual supply was not in excess of the annual demand. But as, in the exercise of this right, the graduate became *ipso facto* a member of the governing body, and was distinguished by the title *Magister Regens*, it was a natural consequence that the degree should become an object of desire, as well for the honor as for the privileges it conveyed ; and hence that the number of graduates should increase. The tables of Huber show that it did so ; the average number of masters annually graduated at Cambridge about the middle of the seventeenth century, being not far from tenfold greater than the corresponding number for the same period of the century before—and this although the aggregate undergraduate attendance had largely diminished. Hence, in time, the supply of teachers began to exceed the demand, and numbers were graciously absolved from their obligation. The masters thus relieved from duty, and also the regent masters when they ceased to teach, were styled *Magistri non Regentes*. Thus it happened that a degree came to be, what it is with us now, simply a title of honor, and an attestation of ascertained proficiency in learning and superior intellectual culture.

In the earlier universities the power to grant degrees was a concession from the supreme head of the Church. Princes who desired to found universities, made application for the privilege to the Pope. At a later period secular rulers claimed and exercised this power independently. The power of conferring degrees, however, could not be self-assumed ; it could only be exercised as a grant from the highest authorities of the church or state. But neither church nor state were by any means lavish

in the concession of this important power. Before the fifteenth century there were but five universities in all Germany, including Austria and Bohemia ; two in England ; and two or three in France. With the progress of time the number has increased ; but even at present there are but twenty-two German universities, in a population of forty-two millions, or about one to two millions ; fifteen in France, with a population of thirty-seven millions, or one to two and a half millions ; and four in England, with a population of twenty-three millions, or one to five and three-quarters millions. Legally there is but one university in France, of which the fifteen above named are branches, locally styled academies. From an enumeration made in 1860, it appears that, in all Europe, the number of universities is one hundred and eleven, in an aggregate population of three hundred millions ; giving one university to about two and three quarters millions of inhabitants.

These simple statistical facts, without a superadded word of comment, abundantly explain how it happens that an academic degree possesses a value in the British Islands and on the continent of Europe which it has not in America. The sources of honor are so few, their characters are so high, they embody a learning so profound, their teachers are in general so celebrated and of so universally recognized authority, and finally the tests to which they subject aspirants are so rigorous, that a certificate of proficiency received from them has a meaning that all the world can understand.

All these advantages we have thrown away. We have not only multiplied almost indefinitely these fountains of honor, but we have taken no care that, in their composition, they shall either represent learning or command reverence. A village parson, a village doctor, and a vil-

lage lawyer, supported by a banker, a shop-keeper or two, a manufacturer, and perhaps a gentleman farmer, constitute very commonly the tribunal who are to dispense the precious distinctions which the conservative wisdom of other times entrusted only to the honored hands of those whom universal consent pronounced to be the wisest and best. This tribunal, moreover, not merely bestows upon the juvenile aspirant to academic honors the customary certificate of his proficiency ; but, passing in review before its critical eye the theologians and the jurists, and the statesmen, and the men of letters, and even the professors of the highest learning themselves, strews over the whole surface of the land, with a generosity as profuse as its discriminations are inscrutable, a periodical shower of honorary degrees.

Can we not do something to remedy this miserable business ? Taking up the other morning one of our leading daily journals, my eye fell upon an article entitled "The Commencement Season." The editor lamented, as I have been lamenting, the degradation which has befallen the degrees in arts in our country. He ascribed this deplorable fact, as I have ascribed it, to the indefinite multiplication of degree-giving institutions, the absence in many instances of any kind of guaranty in respect either to the thoroughness of their teaching or the learning of their teachers, and the absolute certainty that they are too often sadly deficient in both these particulars ; and he concluded with the observation that, if academic degrees are hereafter to command any respect, it can only be secured by writing after the letters which denote the distinction, the name of the college conferring it. Even that perhaps cannot save them ; for when any significant symbol, badge, or token, especially if it have been originally of a decorative character, becomes an object of pub-

lie ridicule and contempt, it cannot be restored to the favor it has lost, even though covered with the mantle of the highest respectability.

Can we not, then, I repeat, do something to remedy this lamentable of things? There is a remedy—not easy of application, perhaps, because, to be effectual, it requires the concurrence of many independent wills—but a remedy nevertheless if we will adopt it. It is this. Let the State reserve to itself the exclusive right of granting academic degrees. So far as this right is concerned I would, if it were possible, make *tabula rasa* of the entire existing system; that is to say, without interfering in the least with the scholastic operations of existing colleges, I would withdraw from all of them the degree-giving power, and place them all upon the same footing as the colleges of Oxford and Cambridge. But, inasmuch as that would be an infringement of vested rights, it would be impracticable to do it unless the power were voluntarily relinquished. Leave, then, the existing colleges alone, but allow no more to be created with this power.

Let each state, then, establish for itself a state university, charged with no duty of teaching, but empowered to charter teaching colleges, at its discretion, in all the faculties; to prescribe general rules for the conduct of these colleges, to exercise supervision over them, to examine all candidates for admission to them, and all proficient who may be presented by them for degrees; and, finally, to confer those degrees by diploma under the seal of the university, setting forth in such diploma the name of the college presenting the candidate. As it respects existing colleges, though they would retain the right to issue diplomas in their own names and under their own seals, I would still extend to them the same system of examinations, relieving them from the task of testing the

qualifications of candidates either for admission or for graduation.

The State University, therefore, as I conceive it, would be a body possessing powers considerably resembling those of the University of London ; yet not altogether, for though, like that university, it would examine for degrees, it would not examine all comers indiscriminately, but only those presented by the colleges. It would also be competent to exercise a jurisdiction and would be charged with responsibilities which do not belong to that at all.

Were this scheme to be adopted in every State, although it might not, except by voluntary surrender, diminish the number of our degree-conferring institutions, it would nevertheless, for all practical purposes, reduce this number to thirty-eight. Furthermore, as each State University would necessarily be compelled to employ a permanent board of professional examiners, who, from the dignity and responsibility of their office, would naturally be, like those of the University of London, men of profound learning and usually men of celebrity, its diplomas would all carry with them a stamp of authority which is sadly wanting to many of those now issued. Under this system, the sound colleges would be distinguished by the uniformity with which their candidates would secure approval ; the feeble, unsound, or specious would be compelled to strengthen and reform themselves, or would be crowded out of the competition.

Now in this State of New York the actual condition of things in our educational system is such as to make very easy, and almost to invite, the trial of this experiment. We have a State University actually in existence. It possesses in a measure the very powers which the scheme contemplates.

It is competent to charter colleges with faculties of arts and faculties of medicine, but not with faculties of law or faculties of theology. It possesses the right of supervision and of visitation, not only over the colleges created by itself, but over those previously in existence. It has the power to grant, by diploma issued under its seal, all such academic degrees as are known to or are usually conferred by any incorporated college or university in Europe, except degrees in arts.

The powers of this institution, therefore, need only to be somewhat enlarged, and its duties and responsibilities to be somewhat increased, to enable it to fulfil all the functions proposed in the scheme I have submitted. As to its form, it needs no change.

Could this plan be adopted in this state only, it is hardly too much to hope that the salutary results of the example would, in progress of time, lead to the adoption of the same plan by sister states ; so that, at a period not quite hopelessly distant in the future, the chaos that involves the superior education of the country might be reduced to some order ; and all its organs and representatives might command and deserve the same degree of public confidence which is now awarded only to the few.

The views I have thus presented are not by any means new with me. I have entertained them many years. When the plan first presented itself to my mind it seemed so feasible that, I was sanguine enough to believe, it need only be presented to be accepted. I ventured therefore with deference to lay it, first of all, as seemed to be most fitting, before the zealous friend of education then at the head of the University, the late Chancellor Pruyn.

And here let me pause for a moment to pay, in passing, my feeble but sincere tribute of honor, reverence, and affection to the memory of the distinguished public

servant and estimable man whose name I have just spoken.

JOHN VAN SCHAICK LANSING PRUYN was one of those rare and noble specimens of humanity whom Providence sends occasionally into the world to serve as type and model of the good citizen. Endowed by nature with a generous heart, a clear intellect, a sound understanding, a well-balanced judgment, and an instinctively refined taste—natural gifts to which a superior education had superadded all the advantages which a liberal and scholarly culture could bestow—he was admirably fitted to fill any position of trust or responsibility in social or civic life; and there was none to which he was called which he did not adorn.

The representative of this city and district in the councils of the State and of the nation; a leading member of numerous organizations established under state authority or by private association for the promotion of useful or benevolent objects; an energetic man of business, intimately associated in the direction of financial institutions or business corporations wielding vast capital and involving in the wisdom of their administration the interests of the entire community; learned and able in his chosen profession of the law; an active, earnest, and most influential promoter of education, as well in the local institutions which received his personal care, as in this Board of Regents, of which he was for thirty-three years a member and for nearly sixteen its Chancellor and presiding officer, and in which his influence stamped its impress upon the entire educational system of the State—in every capacity he left behind him an honorable record of duty conscientiously fulfilled, and of substantial practical results successfully accomplished.

Possessed of an ample fortune, surrounded by every

object which could minister to the gratification of a refined taste or a cultivated intellect, generous in the hospitality with which he welcomed his friends to his elegant mansion, he yet avoided ostentation, and indulged in no wasteful extravagance of idle luxury, but in many forms of unseen and silent beneficence contributed freely of his abundance to the relief of penury and the solace of affliction.

In his personal character he was all that is admirable. Severe in integrity and unbending in principle, he was also honorable in his impulses, kindly in his disposition, gracious in his manner, affable in his address, interesting and instructive in his conversation—producing thus upon those who met him even only once, an impression that was never effaced.

His religious convictions were earnest and sincere ; yet, while he bore constant witness to the faith that was in him by his scrupulous observance of all the ordinances of the church of which he was a member, there was nothing exaggerated in his display of piety. His Christian character was indeed in beautiful harmony with the definition of the apostle : Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this : to visit the fatherless and the widow in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

Though his strictly political life was by no means the largest or most conspicuous portion of his honorable career, yet so constantly was he, in one relation or another, before the public, that his name was a household word in every corner of the State, everywhere familiar, and always associated with some good work ; so that on the fatal morning when the telegraph announced that he had passed away from earth, there was not a citizen but felt that one of the noblest columns of our civil

and social fabric had fallen—not one of the thousands that had ever met him but felt that he had lost a friend.

He has passed away from us forever, but his memory lives. In this convocation over which he for so many years presided, it will be kept forever green. When in succeeding years we come together in our annual reunions at this capital, we shall still seem to catch the bright smile with which he used to greet us, we shall still seem to hear the cordial welcome which used to fall so genially from his lips. And when again we return to our separate fields of labor, his remembrance will accompany us as an animating and inspiring influence ; and if ever in our lessons to the young we would impress their tender minds with a sense of the beauty of virtue or the grandeur of moral rectitude, we shall recount to them the life history and point to the noble example of JOHN V. L. PRUYN, the honest man, the generous friend, the untiring philanthropist, the devout Christian, the faithful public servant, the pure patriot, the accomplished scholar, the energetic man of business—the good citizen.

Eight years have passed—perhaps ten—since I presented my scheme to the late Chancellor, and was so happy as to secure from him an expression of his approbation. He advised me to lay it before other members of the Board of Regents. None seemed to me more likely justly to appreciate its merits than the able and influential member who has since been so worthily called to fill his place, and who then represented in part the city of New York in the Senate of the State. Senator Benedict was also pleased to express his approval of the plan, considered abstractly upon its own merits. But his sagacity detected an obstacle in the way of its practical success which, I confess, had not occurred to me, or which, at any rate, had not occurred to me as serious ; it was this : If the

Regents assume the duty of conducting examinations, they must have permanent and able examiners; if they have examiners they must pay them; in order to pay them they must have money; they cannot find money unless the Legislature gives it; and to ask money for the purpose from the Legislature would be hardly more effectual than to call spirits from the vasty deep. This was a point on which the position of the Senator enabled him to speak from conviction—it was, I am sure, an unwilling conviction, but it was conviction nevertheless—and my courage fell. Till now, since that time, I have never dared to revive the subject; but the plan has still continued to linger in my mind as the *beau idéal* of an educational system for our State and country which ought to be realized, and which, at some period in the future, I would fain hope may be so still.

And why should it not? Could the insignificant sum necessary to carry this grand scheme into effect in our state be better appropriated? Can a state whose material wealth is so vast as to be expressible only in thousands of millions, hesitate over the exercise of a modest liberality which is sure to build up for her a fund of intellectual wealth of a value inestimably greater?

What, moreover, after all, would be the cost? Ten, twenty, possibly twenty-five thousand dollars annually—a poll-tax, say, of from two to five mills per head upon her five millions of inhabitants. This, too, to maintain a system of education of which the successful result in a single instance may pay her back a hundredfold the expenditure of a century!

But why should we be always asking for a mercenary return? and for every miserable coin which we release from our reluctant grasp demand a guaranty in advance that it shall come back to us again, identically in kind,

and with usury ? Is the dignity of the State worth nothing ? Is nothing due to the rank she holds among enlightened peoples ? Should not her institutions be in harmony with the advanced civilization of which she justly makes her boast ? I think our people, I think our Legislature even, when questions are concerned which involve the character of the State, do not always dole out their bounties with so parsimonious a hand ; and if I did, I could not look around me from the position in which I stand, and mark these sumptuous columns, these glowing frescoes, these gilded mouldings, and these sculptured capitals, and not feel that I had done them injustice. It is impossible, I say to myself, that a legislature and a people can rear a monument of architectural splendor so magnificent as this, and do it in order, by this sign, to typify their greatness, their wealth, their cultivated taste, and their spirit of enlightened liberality ; and can yet be unconscious how far this gorgeous show falls short, after all, of accomplishing its object in the noblest sense ; or insensible to the ambition to illustrate their truest dignity and greatness, by raising side by side with this grand achievement of material art, a monument so far superior to it in grandeur, that it shall endure and go on growing in beauty and splendor long after these polished stones we see around us shall have crumbled into ruin.

But important changes which require the concurrence of many minds, simple though they may be, and desirable as they may appear, are rarely accomplished speedily. The spirit of conservatism yields slowly even to conviction ; and conviction, however intense in the individual, permeates the social mass as gradually as elevation of temperature makes its silent way through a solid which has been heated at a single point.

I look for no sudden success of the scheme I have out-

lined—hardly for anything like a general though cautious approval. But if, as I believe, it has a substantial basis of common sense, it will not fail to find silent favor with the thinking few, and through them it will yet recommend itself to others beyond ; till, by the slow process of diffusion, it shall at length leaven the whole lump of popular opinion. After that there will be no further trouble with legislatures, for legislatures are never sparing of money, except when they fear the people.

It is now ninety-two years since the passage of the act “to institute an University within this State,” under which the present organization has been since continuously operating . When the full century since it entered upon its beneficent work shall have been completed, the event will presumably be commemorated by some fitting ceremonial. It seems to me that I cannot more appropriately conclude this address, to which you have done me the honor to listen with a courteous attention which I fear I have somewhat abused, than by expressing the fervent hope—almost the belief—that on that interesting occasion, if not earlier, it may be possible to announce that the limitations upon the powers of the University of the State of New York, which, during the first century of its existence, have so sensibly restricted its usefulness, have been at length removed ; and that thenceforth, under its fostering care and wise supervision, the educational system of the State, moulded into a form in which unity of design and uniformity of practice shall pervade it throughout all its complicated ramifications, may be inspired with new life and new vigor, and become, in the succeeding centuries, the index, as it is to be the instrumentality, of an ever-rising mental culture and an ever-advancing civilization.



THE OBLIGATION OF THE STATE TO PROVIDE FOR THE EDUCATION OF ITS CITIZENS; THE EXTENT OF THE OBLIGATION; AND THE GROUNDS ON WHICH IT RESTS.

EDUCATION AND THE STATE:

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BEFORE THE REGENTS OF THE UNIVERSITY OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK
AT THEIR FIRST ANNUAL COMMENCEMENT, HELD IN THE
STATE CAPITOL AT ALBANY,

JULY 10, 1879,

BY

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